

A
SERMON

PREACH'D

Before the QUEEN,

AT

St. JAMES's Chappel,

On Wednesday the 19th of March, 17¹¹/₁₂.

By J. ADAMS, D. D.

Rector of St. Bartholomew near the Royal Exchange, and Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

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SERMON

PREACHED

Before the QUEEN

AT

St. James's Chapel

On the 10th of March, 1777.

By J. ADAMS, D.D.

Rector of St. Andrew's Church, near the City of London, and Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

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S E R M O N

Preach'd before the

QUEEN at St. James's, &c.

Isaiah Chap. lvii. v. 15.

Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, whose Name is Holy, I dwell in the High and Holy Place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble Spirit, to revive the Spirit of the Humble, and to revive the Heart of the Contrite Ones.

I Shall endeavour to make these Words Useful and Suitable to the present Season, by discoursing upon them in this Method.

- I. By shewing for what Reasons it is most probable that the Prophet chose out these particular Attributes, to introduce what follows. *Thus saith the High and Lofty One that Inhabiteth Eternity, whose Name is Holy.*

II. How great God's Goodness and Mercy is, who notwithstanding His Excellency and Perfection in so many respects, yet vouchsafes to descend so Low, as He declares in those remarkable Words. *I dwell in the High and the Holy Place; with him A L S O, that is of a Contrite and Humble Spirit.*

III. The Gracious Design and Happy Effect of this, *To revive the Spirit of the Humble, and to revive the Heart of the Contrite ones.*

I. For what Reasons it is most probable, that the Prophet Chose out these particular Attributes, &c.

As that which is spoken of here is Wonderful in itself, and of the greatest Benefit to those that should be worthy to receive it; so it is introduc'd in the most Glorious manner; Those Attributes being chosen out for this purpose, which are the most Awful in the Divine Nature: *Supreme Majesty, Eternity, and Holiness*: This was in order to give Authority to the Speaker, and to raise the Attention of the Hearer; for with what Reverence and Duty should all the Manifestations of *His* Will be received, who is *the High and Lofty One*? How unalterable and unchangable must *His* Councils, *His* Promises be, Who is immortally the same, *Who inhabiteth Eternity*! How Perfect in themselves; How much for the Good of every Soul which hearkens to them? Since they come from Him *Whose Name is Holy.*

These

These particular Attributes are useful also, to set forth the *Goodness* of God: His *Majesty* consider'd by it self, would be only Dreadful; His *Holiness* inquired into alone, would increase the distance between God and Man; and represent Him as incommunicable to Humane Nature; His Eternity too would only increase our Astonishment, unless we consider'd each of these Attributes, and all of them together, as the Instruments of his Goodness, and the Security of it: If Goodness and Mercy, when they are joyn'd to Sovereign Power make Earthly Princes the Joy and Admiration of their Subjects, because it is then they Reflect the Image of that God whose Vicegerents they are, in the most Glorious manner; What must it be to Behold these as United in God Himself, to Consider Infinite *Goodness* directed by Infinite *Wisdom* and *Holiness*, and communicating it self by *Almighty Power*?

This should often be the Subject of our Meditations, that we may know how to Love and Obey, that our Souls may feel that just mixture of Passions, that Awful Gratitude, that Humble Hope, and Dutious Gladness; which are so necessary to keep it Pleas'd and Steddy in its Obedience.

Again, These Attributes were made choice of, to take away those Doubts or Objections, as to what follows, which might rise from the Infinite Distance between God and Man; for if this be so, How is it possible that *He* should ever dwell with Him? Nay, How should *He* dwell

dwell chiefly with those who are more Miserable, more Contemptible in Appearance than all the World besides? The Atheist would laugh at this, the Humble not dare to hope it: Therefore, the Prophet asserts here in the most solemn manner, that God is indeed the *High and Lofty One that Inhabiteth Eternity*, the very same whose Name is *Holy*. Nay, therefore He introduces God himself as making this Declaration, *I dwell in the High and Holy Place*, yet for all this Sovereign Power, this Infinite Distance He goes on with Him also that is of a *Contrite and Humble Spirit*; The same who resides in Heaven, as to His Glory, is ever present by his Grace to His Faithful Servants. Lastly, This was also, to shew the Hypocrisy or Folly of those Pretences, which some People make use of, for delaying to be good, and deferring their Repentance; that they are afraid or ashamed to appear before God, that sinful Dust or Ashes can have no Communication with the Exalted Majesty, the Purity and Holiness of the Divine Nature, and therefore, tho' they fain would, yet they dare not lift up their Eyes towards Heaven, or ask for Forgiveness: O False Humility! Where was this Modesty, when they committed so many Sins? Did they never Hear of the Incarnation? Do they know nothing of the Cross of Christ? Through *this*, God is not only ready to forgive, but to descend to the Faithful Penitent: Let Humility attend upon a Lively Faith, and then it will be improv'd into Repentance, and *that* into Contrition; Then the Soul will

Hswb

Hearken

Hearken with Joy to What the Prophet assures it of here, in the Name of God; *Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity.*

But hitherto all this is but a kind of Introduction, what He delivers next is in the Words of God Himself, and will shew Effectually.

H. The Greatness of God's Goodness and Mercy, who, notwithstanding He thus asserts His Excellency and Perfection, *I dwell in the High and Holy Place*, yet vouchsafes to descend so low as He declares in those Remarkable Words, *With Him also that is of a Contrite and Humble Spirit.*

The Heathens thought that Heaven was the most proper Place for the chiefest of their Gods, but tho' they thought so, because it was the *High*, yet have they seem not to concern'd themselves whether it was the *Holy Place* or no, but on the contrary represented it frankly as Polluted by the most Outrageous Passions, and foulest Appetites.

The *Jews* were instructed better, and believ'd in one God; in *One*, as much above any Error by his Infinite Wisdom, as above any failing by his Eternal Holiness; so Pure, so Perfect in Himself, as to Sanctify the Place of his Residence, by his Presence.

But the Christian Religion affords us more Noble, more Distinct Notions of this *Holy Place*, in that it was Sanctify'd to the Highest Degree upon our Redemption, when the Son of God ascending thither, enter'd there as our High Priest,

Priest, and sat down as our Mediator on the Right Hand of the Majesty on High: *For such an High Priest became us, who is Holy, Harmless, Undeiled, se- perate from Sinners, and made higher then the Heavens: Who neither by the Blood of Goats and Calves, but by his own Blood enter'd in once into the Holy Place, having obtain'd eternal Salvation for us.* Heb. 7. 26. — 9. 12. What can give us an higher No- tion of the Holiness of that Place, which was thus Sanctify'd by the Blood of Christ? And where he Dwells that is Holiness itself? And therefore how Great, how Adorable, must his Goodness be! When *such as his Majesty is, such is his Mercy*: When his Infinite Height serves only to enable him to stoop more Low, so very Low, as to dwell with him also, that is of a Contrite and humble Spirit.

'Tis a noble Thought of the Psalmist, when be- holding as it were at one View, the Greariness of Gods Majesty, and the Condescensions of his Pro- vidence: He cries out in a Rapture; *Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high? Who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in Hea- ven and in the Earth?* Psal. 113. 5, 6. Those Glorious Bodys of Light which adorn the Hea- vens: Those blessed Spirits who Inhabit them, and are ever Celebrating Their Creator's, and Our Redeemer's Praise; are yet so much Inferior to God in their Nature, that it is Humility in Him ever to behold them. What must it be then to be- hold the Things that are in the Earth? What must it be to descend to dwell there, to Dwell with the most unworthy of all his Creatures; and

and that too soonest, when in all the Lowliness and Humiliation of Sorrow and Repentance?

But the Wonders of the *Incarnation*, will make this less strange to us Christians. For then the Widest extreams of Highest and Lowest, in the Divine and Humane Nature met together in the Holy Jesus : Who amidst the meanest Circumstances of this Mortal State : Poor, Hungry, and Despis'd ; Calumniated, Persecuted, Crucified : Yet by the Holiness of his Life and Doctrine, and by the Power of his Miracles, appear'd manifestly to all Unprejudic'd Persons, to be *The High, the Lofty One, that Inhabith Eternity.*

O let us reflect upon this with joy, for this is the Foundation of our Hopes, the Spring of our eternal Thanksgiving ; from that time (so great is his Love) upon Account of these very Sufferings even to the Death of the Cross, do's the Son of God delight to be with the Children of Men, and to dwell with the contrite and humble Spirit. For since God became Man, and Ascended up again to Glory, the Object of our Faith and Worship is more fixt and plain, and the Intercourse between Heaven and Earth made more easy, we direct our Prayers to our Gracious Mediator ; he offers them to the Father in Virtue of his perfect Obedience and spotless Sacrifice upon the Cross : And then Grace and Forgiveness Descend swiftly to us : So powerful is *His* Intercession, so much Virtue is there in *His* blessed Name ; For he wants no Assistance, no Under-Intercessors : But will be alone the Convey of our Petitions, and the Object of our Adoration.

B

But

But perhaps it may not seem so Wonderful that Heaven should be Sanctify'd by God's immediate Presence, or become Eminently the Habitation of his Holiness. For where should the Creator, Redeemer, and Governour of the World reside? Where should Infinite Perfection dwell, but in the High, and the Holy Place? *That* which is most Amazing is what Follows; that He should do so *with him also, that is of a Contrite and Humble Spirit.*

The chief difference between Men in the sight of God, is from their Obedience or Repentance: His Majesty and Power give place to his Holiness; and therefore it is not outward Advantage, but inward Purity which is requir'd to receive Him; which Purity, is best obtain'd by Contrition, and best preserv'd by Humility: Pride and Innocence cannot last long together, because, tho' Pride may make one scorn to do Evil, yet it will scorn too that Advice, that Caution, and those other Means which are necessary, to discover and avoid what is Evil: And when a Man is once fallen into Wickedness, Pride runs into Impudence, defends insolently what was done thro' inadvertency, and becomes incapable of Repentance; to the utter exclusion of all Goodness, and therefore of God himself. Whereas Humility either preserves the Soul from Sinning, or gives it so just a sight of its own Deformity afterwards, as to strike it with Shame and Sorrow, and make it strive to recover its Innocency and Beauty by the sincere Repentance of a Contrite Spirit; and then God vouchsafes to dwell with such a one.

1. Because it is most like unto Him ; as God is a Spirit, and moves thro' every part of the Creation, He must be pleas'd most, with what is most like Himself; this must be the Humane Soul when truly Rational, when not disturb'd by irregular Passions or Appetites, or deformed by the Ruins, or polluted by the Remains of them. The Communicative Goodness of the Divine Nature makes it ever ready to enter where it meets with no Opposition, and to fill every Vacancy that is fit to receive it, but Ingratitude and Rebellion blacken the Soul, and an ill Conscience becomes Hell it self; How then can the High and Holy One dwell with such a Spirit, so very like one of those who were driven from Heaven for their Pride and Disobedience? Whereas, when the Soul is purified by Faith and Repentance, the Holy Spirit rejoyces in what is so like it self, enters in and settles there : Nothing indeed seems swifter then Divine Vengeance, yet as this is God's *strange Work*, he must be slow to begin it, and glad to end it ; But how much swifter must his Mercies naturally be, since these are the Works which He delights in, therefore do's *He wait to be Gracious to us* ; Therefore when our Repentance permits Him to be so, He conveys Forgiveness to us, more swift than Light, Nay, then Thought it self, and dwells with the Contrite and Humble Spirit, to continue His Blessings to it, and to secure it from all Temptation ; This He do's,

2. Because, such a Spirit is best Qualify'd by Contrition and Humility to receive Him : Contrition is a very high Degree of Repentance, it breaks as it were, the Stubborn Heart, Refines and Purges it from its Earthly Dross, and from the Pollutions of the World ; yet Repentance can never arise to so high a degree, but in the true Christian. When *He* remembers the Mercies of his Redemption, and reflects duly upon Judgment and Eternity ; When *He* recollects all that his Gracious Lord has done for Him, and all that he has done against Himself, when He finds for what Wretched Enjoyments He has lost immortal Happiness, this will Work him up to such a Sense of his Folly and Misery, to such sincere and hearty Sorrow for it, as no other Motives are capable of producing. I grant, that a good Man may feel something of this from the Light of Nature, and the Force of his Reason ; but Repentance must be always proportionable to that measure of Divine Goodness which a Man is conscious He has transgressed against, and that will be most piercing which arises not only from the Fear of Danger incurr'd, but from the Shame of Love and Mercy abus'd ; What Love was ever like that of our Crucify'd Redeemer ? And when We believe in Him and yet Sin against Him, what Mercy was ever abus'd so ingratelously ? What Repentance can ever be like the Contrite Christians ? Therefore it must be with such an Humble Spirit, with such a Contrite Heart that God will dwell soonest and longest.

'Tis

'Tis true, perfect Purity is inconsistent with Humane Nature: However it may be such as God will improve himself, and so allow of, as to dwell with it; we read, that the *Heavens themselves are not clean in his sight*, Job 15. 15, Yet he has fix'd his Throne there: well then, may we believe that He will dwell with *that* Soul, whose Stains are wash'd away by the Blood of Christ, which is Sanctify'd by the Spirit of Holiness, and becomes still more Pure, more Enlighten'd, the nearer that God approaches to it.

And this still the rather, when Contrition is attended with Humility, for this is the Faithful Guardian of Repentance, and its best Security against Relapsing into Sin; Vanity can never be a sure Preservative of Any Excellency, but whilst it opens the Door to Admirers, it lets in every Temptation, and is apt to end at last in Stubborn Atheism or Sinless Perfection; each of which are equally incapable of Repentance, and exclude equally the Son of God: But Humility teaches the Soul to know itself, to know its own Ignorance, Frailty and Misery; and therefore how certainly it must be lost, be wretched for ever, without a Redeemer; this will shew it consequently, the Necessity of Repentance, and make it implore Forgiveness in the Pangs of Contrition, in the Sighs and Tears of a broken Heart, as in those Words of our Prophet: *Look down from eaven, Hand behold from the Habitation of thy Holiness, and of thy Glory, Where is thy Zeal and thy Strength, the*
sounding

foundings of thy Bowels towards me? Are they restrained? Or as the Psalmist, Hear me, O Lord, for thy Loving Kindness is great: Turn unto me according to the Multitude of thy Tender Mercies: Draw nigh unto my Soul and Redeem it, O save me for thy Mercy's sake. How certainly will such a Soul be heard! How quickly will the God of Mercy fly to its Relief and Comfort! In a word, what Wealth, what Force, what all the Wisdom of this World cannot do, is done by Humility; it opens the Heavens to our Prayers, it brings down the Son of God to us, and engages Him to dwell with the Contrite Spirit: But to the end that we may have a full and compleat Sense of this Goodness, I come to shew,

III. The gracious Design and happy Effect of his doing so, whereof we have assurance in those Words, *To revive the Spirit of the Humble, and to revive the Heart of the Contrite Ones.*

The Joys of Heaven consist in seeing God as he is, the Praising him, the being United to him for ever more: But God antedates this Happiness to those that are of an Humble and Contrite Spirit; and begins their Heaven to them immediately, by the Joys of his Presence, the Raptures of a good Conscience, and the Assurance of Immortal Happiness. On the other Side, to aggravate the Folly and the Madness of the Wicked, *Their Hell* begins immediately, Guilty Passion, and Disappointed Pride, Strugglings between Infidelity and Remorse, Rack and Torment them: Yet *this part of Hell*

Hell, the Hell of this Life, is still capable of Repentance, *that* which follows after Death is not so, and Repentance can never feel half the Sorrow which Guilt do's; but Pride hinders this, Pride makes Men Devils, and keeps them so: The false shame of having been in the wrong, the pretended Modesty and Humility of not daring to own it, keeps them in it for ever; and the Disease becomes incurable, for want of being discover'd to the *Physician of Souls*: Yet he needs not to be inform'd of it, he sees into all the Pride of the impenitent Heart, and by what shifts and Pretences it looks out for help from the meanest Things, while it scorns to ask any of its God: Yet after all, what is the Ease they pretend to, better than stupidity? Or what is their affected Indolence, only being becalm'd? Not that this can last long neither: But as if Guilt were rather refresh'd than silenc'd by their vain Amusements, it wakes out of them again with new Rage and stronger Violence: Alas! How short are the Intervals, but how lasting the Torments of an ill Conscience! Whereas the way to Peace and Happiness is near and easy: If the same Heart that holds out thus Stubbornly against its God were broken by Contrition; if the same Spirit thus exalted against its Redeemer, would but humble it self before him; he would graciously descend to assist it, He would new form it, he would dwell with it, and Comfort it with the Joys of his Salvation.

Here

Here then let me stay and Expostulate a little with the stubborn Impenitent. What is it that can make thee continue in so much Misery, and refuse so much Happiness. When Heaven is offer'd thee, how comes Hell to be thy Choice? Is there any thing unreasonable in Repentance? Is it the Shame or the Sorrow of it that makes thee so averse to it; As to the Shame; Repentance is nothing but the recovery of right Reason, and therefore consistent with Wit and Sense, it is nothing but the acknowledging and forsaking of Error and Vice, and therefore consistent with Truth and Justice; 'tis the acknowledging them to God only, *to that High and Lofty One that Inhabiteth Eternity*; and therefore consistent with Courage and Honour: So that which Way soever vain Man shifts and turns Himself as to pretended Shame, he still meets with the Reasonableness of Repentance: Then as to the Sorrow, that looks so Dreadful in it; How often is so much as this requires, thrown away upon the World, upon trifling Losses, Nay, upon convenient Disappointments: While we lament our ill Conduct in miscarrying in such a Cause, or such a Project, in what relates to our Ambition, our Avarice, or our Revenge; We deny ourselves Sleep and Food; We Watch and we fast perversely, and never Pardon our selves any Faults so soon, as those which we commit against our God.

I have

I have now gon through those several Things which I propos'd to shew from these Excellent Words in the Text, it remains only to draw two or three Practical Inferences from what has been said, and then I shall have done.

1. *If the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, dwells also with the Contrite and Humble Spirit*, then how extensive is his Goodness, how watchful his Providence, and therefore how entirely should we trust in Him, and in Him alone? He that trusts only in himself, depends commonly upon a Fool; he that trusts so in any other, depends upon a Creature, that is at the best, weak in its Knowledge and Judgment, unsteddy in its Gratitude and Friendship, and uncertain as to its Ability or Duration: But he that trusts in God, trusts in *Him whose Name is Holy*, who cannot, would not deceive his Creatures, *who inhabiteth Eternity*, and therefore there can be no End of his Power or his Love; but they extend beyond Mortal Life, not only to *revive the Contrite and the Humble Spirit* in this World, but to raise it again united to the Body, to *that Holy Place* where it shall never feel the Pangs of Contrition, never have occasion for any Repentance more.

2. *If He that dwells in the High and Holy Place, dwells also with the Contrite, Spirit*; then, how unworthy is he to be call'd by the Name of Christ, who despises any one, when in the

Bitterness of his Soul, who Censures his Repentance as Hypocrisy, troubles or interrupts him in the lowest Humiliations of it; For then such a Person is truly most worthy of our Esteem, and we ought to be pleas'd to see a Rational Creature take so much Pains to retrieve it self from Vice and Errour, much more to see a Fellow Christian renewing the Image of his God; and therefore should do all we can possibly, to Encourage, Comfort and Protect him; for whatever His outward Condition may be, how much soever encompass'd with Poverty, Contempt, and every sort of seeming Misery; yet for ought we know God is at that very time approaching to dwell with him, and we should remember particularly what is the Design of his doing so, in order to the Practising something of the same nature our selves, namely, *to revive the Spirit of the Humble, and revive the Heart of the Contrite Ones.*

Not that we ought to think that Affliction and Misery are the only Qualifications for this Mercy; Repentance is not always voluntary in such Circumstances, but the Unhappy are too often reduc'd to Goodness; whereas, in an ample Fortune, every Act of Religion is more of Choice and Free-Will, more noble, and more fit for God; Wherefore, whenever Humility is found in the midst of Earthly Glory; When, in the height of Power and Prosperity, we behold a Contrite Spirit, we may be assur'd that God delights to dwell with That
especially;

especially ; and have it in greatest Honour and Veneration-

Lastly, And which is indeed chiefly the Application of the Whole ; If *the High and lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, whose Name is Holy, and dwelleth also with the Contrite and Humble Spirit*, then how many pressing Arguments ? How many urgent Obligations have we from hence to be of such a Contrite and Humble Spirit ? And if we are not so, how justly may we be assur'd, that all these Attributes which were chosen by the Prophet to set forth the Greatness of God's Goodness, will be turn'd against us in the manifestation of his Justice.

Wherefore, if there be any thing indeed of that Reason left which is so constantly abus'd, and yet so constantly boasted of ; If there be any remains of Gratitude and Goodness in us, let us humble our selves before the Father of Mercies at this solemn Season, now, immediately, otherwise it may be too late, the Inclination, the Opportunity may be lost for ever ; Alas, Who that was in his Senses would forfeit his Redeemer's Mercy, would incur the Anger of that High and Lofty One, that Inhabiteth Eternity for want of Repentance ? For want of *that* usual Thought, that common Sense, that ordinary Prudence which we seldom fail of, when we have taken any false Step in what relates to this World, and resolve to be more careful for the future ; but this I hope cannot want farther pressing. I beg
leave

leave to Conclude all with this Observation, which may be useful both for this World and the next: The first Sign of Wisdom is to have as little occasion for Repentance as is possible; the next is, as oft as We have occasion for it to begin it immediately.

God of his Infinite Mercy give us Grace to Practice accordingly, thro' Jesus Christ; to whom with the Father and Holy Spirit be all Honour and Glory, now and for Evermore!

F I N I S.

φ.κ.κ

Howey

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